



Village of Volente newsletter

Summer
2010



New Mayor to Continue 'Community Building' Spirit

By Justine Blackmore-Hilista, Mayor



One day not too long into my first council term, a fellow volunteer I did not know sidled up to me and said, "You know, we're all in Volente for a reason." I looked around to see whom he was addressing, but seeing no one I turned back to him. He was looking at me with a straight face and bright eye and gave me a conspiratorial wink that clearly indicated I should know what he was talking about. And before I could prepare and deliver an appropriate response, he was gone.

The funny thing was, I did know what he was talking about. Everyone in Volente is unique and independent, resilient, outspoken, friendly. We didn't just move to Volente one day in the past, we actively choose to live here every single day. We may argue with each other til the cows come home, but there's rarely a dispute that prevents sharing a laugh over a beer or cup of coffee. And despite our outspoken independence, we have an innate understanding of the concept "united we stand, divided we fall."

Since incorporation, we've had some pretty good challenges for such a quiet country village. We've faced lawsuits, MUDs, and aggressive cities with pipeline dreams and visions of industrial pumping stations dancing in their heads. We've gotten a reputation as a group that shows up, speaks up, and stands our ground.

And we've learned a lot in the last 7 years. We are no longer the naïve and inexperienced rural village we started as. We're a sovereign municipality that has an extensively researched comprehensive plan, a well developed land use code, well thought out and researched ordinances, experienced legal support, and excellent relations with our county and state representatives.

I am thrilled at the opportunity to work with the current council to put the lessons of the last 7 years into action. We will be working to become as efficient, responsive and professional an organization as possible. Fiscal responsibility and accountability is a top priority. We are working on our services and our infrastructure, including setting up a municipal court and planning for an electrical upgrade. Road maintenance is being planned, scooped and implemented. We continue to review

and revise our ordinances to ensure that the best interests of the community are served. We are developing a strong relationship with Travis County to ensure that Volente residents can participate in protecting the preserve that surrounds us. We are actively involved in protecting Lake Travis, and are coordinating a coalition of Lake Travis communities that are prepared to speak up in defense of Lake Travis.

And one of our most important objectives is community building within Volente. A farmer's market and swap meet is in the works, also a community BBQ and picnic, and movie nights at the fire hall. We are in the early planning stages of a city park. We want to bring together our businesses, residents and neighbors so that everyone knows each other and can pull together in the same direction. Have an idea? Bring it to a city council meeting! We are all in Volente for a reason.

Changing of the guard

Former Mayor Jan Yenawine hands off the duties of mayor to Justine Blackmore-Hilista.

In addition, Jan received an award for all the countless volunteer hours he has spent to help get Volente on its feet after incorporation in 2003.



Volente Village in action

Volente's 1st Farmer's Market & Swap Meet to Be Held October 9th

By Matthew Hammond, Council Member



Imagine an area in the middle of town where you could walk to buy some locally grown produce, eggs, a home-

baked pie or maybe buy a piece of art from a local artist or a hidden treasure from someone's garage, all the while being serenaded by a local musician.

The Village of Volente is pleased to make this a reality by holding its inaugural Farmer's Market & Swap Meet on October 9th from 9 am to 1 pm on Mary Street.

Mary Street is the perfect venue for this event as it allows the Village to shut off traffic in a protected "walking-only" zone. This is an opportunity for Volente residents to come out and share your gifts with the community -- whether it be from your garden, kitchen, studio or garage.

Stalls will be available for \$20 to Volente residents for the selling of produce, home-cooked delectables, arts & crafts and garage sale/swap meet items.

Vendors will be expected to supply their own tables and chairs, signage, and if desired, a tent no larger than 10'x10' with tie-downs or weights.

There will be live music from local musicians, educational booths on the Balcones Canyonlands Preserve (BCP) and the ecology of Lake Travis, and perhaps even a chili or pie cook-off contest. We have 3 months to make this something special. Your ideas and contributions will be greatly appreciated.

Put this date on your calendar!
October 9th, 9 am - 1 pm on Mary Street.

If you have any questions or suggestions, please contact **Matthew Hammond at (512)428-8819 or email volentemarket@gmail.com**

Volente's Fire Chief Completes International Professional Designation Process

Fire Chief Walter Groman of the Volente Fire Department has successfully completed the process that awards him the professional designation of "Chief Fire Officer" (CFO). The Commission on Professional Credentialing (CPC) met on May 5, 2010, to officially confer the designation upon Chief Groman. Chief Groman is one of only 693 CFO's worldwide.



**Volente Fire Chief
Walter Groman**

Chief Groman has a rich knowledge of the emergency services profession and has far surpassed critical core competencies for personnel serving in senior fire officer positions.

The Commission on Professional Credentialing, an entity of the Center for Public Safety Excellence, Inc., (CPSE) administers the CFO Designation Program. The CPC consists of individuals from academia, federal and local government, and the fire and emergency medical services profession.

The CPC awards the CFO designation only after an individual successfully meets all of the organization's stringent criteria. The process includes an assessment of the applicant's education, experience, professional development, technical competencies, contributions to the profession, and community involvement. In addition, All applicants are required to identify a future professional development plan.

To learn more about CPC, visit www.publicsafetyexcellence.org. To learn more about the Volente Fire Department, visit www.vvfd.net.

Chief Groman has been a member of the Volente Fire Department for 3 years and resides in Austin.

Village of Volente Budget and Finance Report

June 2010

By Mark Scott, Council Member



The village continues to be on sound financial footing with the 2009/2010 income and expenses coming in at or better than budget.

For the fiscal year to date, beginning on October 2009 to June 7 2010, our revenues are ahead of projections, primarily due to above budget tax receipts. Much of this was the payment of prior year's taxes due that were in arrears. Your council was originally projecting a decrease in taxes paid, as property valuations had declined.

We are now 2/3s of the way into our fiscal year, with total village operations so far, coming in at about 60% of our entire year's budget. Even with the increased road repair, tree trimming and road sign expenses, I expect that we will end the year with expenses at or below our income.

Our reserves remain strong, with over 1 year of expenses in reserve for unforeseen circumstances.

Our auditors have completed the audit for financial year 2008/2009, and we expect them to present it to council at our next meeting on June 15th at 7pm at the fire hall. Your council is committed to running our village in the most efficient way possible. I encourage everyone to participate in our government. The more we hear from you, the better job we can do.

Appreciation Award



Mayor Justine Blackmore-Hilista presents former chair of Planning & Zoning Commission, Allison Thrash with an appreciation award for all her hard work.

Village Council



(L to R) Mark Scott, Chris Wilder, Matthew Hammond, Mayor Justine Blackmore-Hilista, Judy Graci and Mayor Pro Tem Frederick Graber

Balcones Canyonlands Preserve Hike

By Mark Scott, Council Member

and Renee Fields, Volunteer Coordinator, Balcones Canyonlands Preserve

The Balcones Canyonlands Preserve (BCP) is system of preserve lands managed to protect endangered species and their habitats. The BCP represents a local effort of partners (including Travis County, City of Austin, and others) to balance protection of endangered species habitat with economic development. Currently over 29,000 acres and 45 caves are protected to mitigate for development of endangered species habitat in western Travis County.

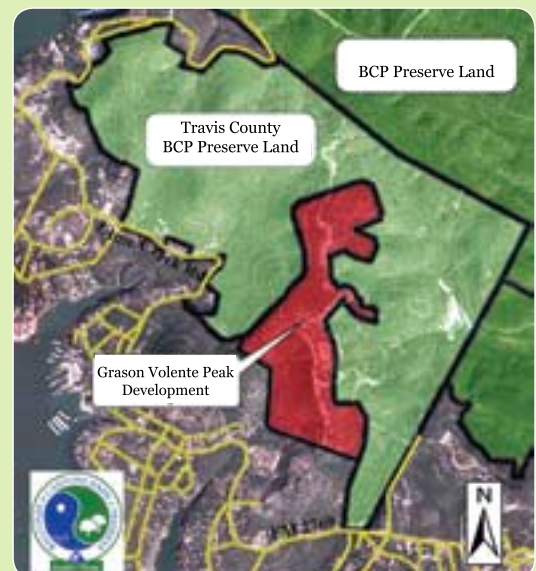
This year Travis County BCP acquired 827 acres to mitigate for future development of endangered species habitat in Volente. As soon as this tract was acquired, Travis County staff began to reach out to Volente neighbors to educate them about the BCP. At the same time, staff began to manage the new preserve land to protect its abundant natural resources. The hills and canyons at Volente are covered with native woodlands, which provide habitat for the endangered golden-cheeked warbler. Native wildlife is abundant especially near the spring-fed creeks and ponds.

Please contact Travis County BCP staff for information about the BCP and the Volente tract. The main contact for the Volente tract is the Travis County BCP land steward Todd Bayless (219-6190 ext 1). As land steward, he is responsible for monitoring and managing natural resources, updating maps, compiling and evaluating natural resources information, and educating the general public and others about the Volente tract of the BCP. If you are interested in volunteer or educational opportunities, contact Renee Fields, the Volunteer and Education/Outreach Coordinator for the BCP (219-6190 ext 7).

The photos were taken on a hike in May, when Travis County staff provided an interpretive tour of the Volente tract to neighbors. We will have another guided hike soon and we hope to see you there!



Todd Bayless, Natural Resources Specialist for Travis County explains the uniqueness of the ecosystem and what plants and animals live within it.





Hedgehog Cactus



“All’s Well that Ends Well” for Annual Trash Pick-Up



By Matthew Hammond, Council Member

On Saturday morning May 1st, the streets of Volente were lined with piles of large disposable items as residents eagerly anticipated the arrival of a Texas Disposal Systems (TDS) truck to haul the items away.

It was all part of the Village’s annual Trash Pick-Up that served each household by collecting 3 cubic feet of non-hazardous garbage — worn-out couches, chairs, carpeting, etc. that would not normally fit in the weekly trash cans serviced by TDS.

Unfortunately, May 1st came and went without any sign of a TDS truck. What happened? Did the truck break down on one of the hazardous hills leading into Volente? Did the driver get lost and end up in the “other” 78641 zipcode? The answer, sadly, is a bit less compelling than that.

According to Ryan Beard, the municipal representative for TDS on this project, “[I]t looks like there was some miscommunication between a customer care rep and me as to the exact date. Without getting too technical, the work orders were put in for the correct date, but they were never confirmed, a necessary step to complete the work order. We have put another care rep on checking on non-confirmed work orders to insure something like this won’t happen again. ...Once again I apologize for the mess up.”

Mr. Beard arranged for a TDS truck to come out on the morning of Tuesday, May 4th. As one Volente resident quipped, “At least there’s a silver lining to this. We’ve got a few more days to add to our piles.”

On May 4th, when it became apparent that not all households were being attended to — the agreement with TDS was to cover every home within the municipality of Volente regardless of whether they used TDS for their normal trash pick-up — more phone calls were placed to clear up yet another miscommunication.

Finally, by the end of Thursday, May 6th, the day that normal trash is picked up on a weekly basis, TDS had serviced every household that had participated in the Trash Pick-Up. Although it took 3 different days and a slew of communiques to complete this project, it was ultimately a success. TDS estimates that it hauled away 10.5 tons of bulk trash. To borrow from Shakespeare, “All’s well that ends well.”

For next year’s Trash Pick-Up we expect it to go off without a hitch...after receiving verification in triplicate.



TDS “heroes of the day” hauled away 10.5 tons of bulk trash.



Authority Makes Decision on Intake Site 4

By Judy Graci, Council Member



At the April BCRUA Board Meeting, the board decided on an intake site at 560msl vs 520msl; the

Volente intake vs the LCRA owned Starnes Island location. The board's decision was based on water level supply, there was no mention of Volente's concerns with health, safety, environmental, or community impact issues.

The BCRUA board had the option of an intake at the LCRA/Starnes Island with the pipeline tunneled to a pump station at the LCRA/Cedar Park Treatment Plant or the LCRA/Leander Treatment Plant. This option is entirely out of Volente, and

only has sub-surface easements. This option was eliminated in the engineering report because of high cost.

The summary of the due diligence intake site report recommended further analysis of three options:

- 1) **Alternative 4.1** Volente Jackson site intake and pump station, open-cut trench pipeline to a tunnel shaft at the Café Bleu parking lot
- 2) **Alternative 4.2** Volente Jackson site intake and pump station, pipeline tunneled from pump station to Trails End Rd; the pump station and tunneled pipeline would be constructed simultaneously
- 3) **Alternative 8** Volente Jackson site intake, pump station at the

Cedar Park Treatment Plant area, pipeline tunneled; the pump station location could need a Chapter 26 Park Hearing determining that there was no other prudent or feasible alternative.

The report recommended to proceed with discussions with city, county, state agencies and stakeholders for input on the alternatives.

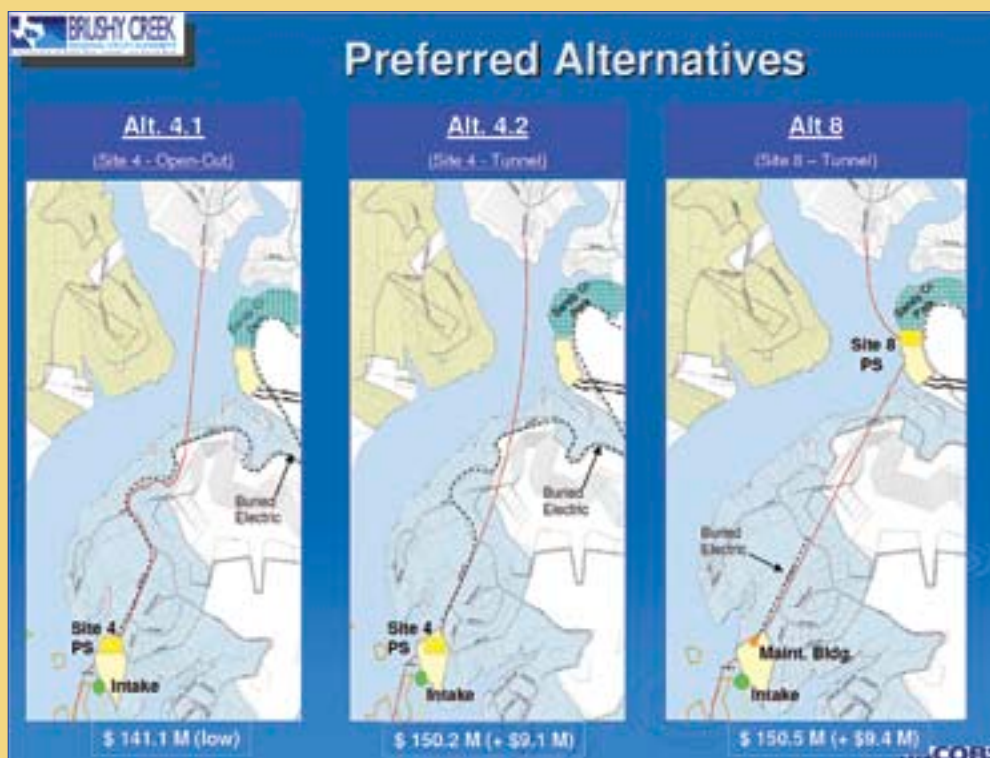
The full report can be found at <http://www.bcrua.org/wp-content/uploads/2007/07/final-draft-0421101.pdf>

The report does not mention that the Jackson site is zoned residential and is in an established neighborhood.

The report details the impacts to construction, not the impacts or costs to the Village or its residents. The BCRUA continues to disregard the Village of Volente's request for impact, cost, and benefit reports.

All of us who have been following this struggle had hoped that reason would prevail and that the BCRUA would use the Starnes Island location for their intake, tunneling the pipeline to their pumping station being installed at either the Cedar Park or Leander water treatment plants. This would have avoided all issues with the Village of Volente.

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BCRUA update



Construction along Trails End Road - (left) Massive pipe sections being staged above ground. (center) Large trenching machine (right) Concrete barriers reduce width of road from two to one lane in some places along Trails End Road.

Authority Makes Decision on Intake Site 4

(Continued from previous page)

However, they cited financial reasons for their choice of the Jackson street residential site, even though they have been able to save over \$60M in Phase I of their project due to lower than expected interest rates and construction costs. We continue to deal with this unpleasant situation.

Field Trip to Trails End

The Volente Council and Planning & Zoning Commissioners took a field trip to Trails End in early May. As we were taking pictures of the construction, the

construction workers were taking pictures of us. The machinery was massive, the trench and the mess incredible. It looked like only two small groups of trees were saved, the rest of the road's 75' easement was clear-cut. The staging area was huge. I was surprised at the single lane access at two or three areas. The project made a strong point that two lane access would be provided. Also I was shocked at how close the construction was to houses. We met Trails End resident Trudy Henke

at the neighborhood park. Trudy described the cycle of thick dust to mud when the watering trucks went by and the scary process of unloading the huge pipe from the trucks. She said the residents asked for car wash coupons, the BCRUA responded that it wasn't in the budget. Trails End Road was closed for hours when a truck caught a power line. She said they were now working weekends, not their "typical" working hours. The pipeline is ahead of schedule and below budget.